

Q&A: Decontamination and Oily Waste Disposal

Overview

Solid wastes, recovered oil, oily fluids, oiled debris and other waste and recyclable materials collected during the Deepwater Horizon response are being handled safely and in accordance with existing federal, state and local regulations. The operations are being conducted by BP and qualified contractors hired by BP. To assure that wastes are handled properly, waste management plans have been prepared and have been reviewed by the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the involved states. The EPA and the US Coast Guard formalized the implementation of the waste management plans through two directives. The directives are meant to hold BP accountable for properly carrying out the plans. The waste plans may be revised from time to time to adjust to changing needs and circumstances of the spill response.

Q: What types of waste are collected from the response and cleanup activities?

A: The waste is classified into three categories: recyclables, municipal trash and crude oil-contaminated (oiled) waste. The recyclables and municipal trash come primarily from office buildings where BP and the Unified Command and Incident Command Posts are located, supply distribution warehouses and from response equipment and personnel field mobilization sites. Typical operations that result in crude oil-contaminated waste include shoreline cleanup, skimming, booming, and decontamination of vessels or equipment. The oiled waste may be solids or liquids.

Common waste forms

From shoreline cleanup: tar balls, vegetation, oiled sand, oiled debris, used personal protective equipment (PPE) and disposal equipment

From oil containment, capture and skimming operations: oil and oily water, oiled debris and sorbent materials

From vessel and other decontamination operations: oily water, oiled sorbent materials and PPE

Q: How and where are vessels decontaminated?

A: Because boats working on oil containment or traveling through oil in the Gulf waters sometimes pick up an oil sheen or residual oil on the outside, they must be washed (decontaminated) so they don't transfer oil to clean waters near the shoreline or in boat harbors. Large, incoming commercial vessels are decontaminated twice: once offshore and a second time at inshore locations. Near-shore decontamination sites also are set up for response vessels, including those in the Vessels of Opportunity program. Additional onshore sites are available to decontaminate various materials used in collecting and containing oil, such as skimmers and booms.

Q: How are oily water liquids managed, such as those from decontamination or skimming?

A: To the extent possible, water is separated from the oil, treated and reused, or disposed at permitted disposal facilities. The recovered oil is sent to facilities that recycle or re-process the oil. Recovered oil that is not suitable for recycling or re-processing may be disposed at properly permitted facilities such as underground

injection disposal wells.

Q: What happens to oily solids, oiled debris, and oil liquids collected from the oil spill clean-up?

A: BP is responsible to ensure that collected waste is disposed properly. According to the EPA-Coast Guard directive on the waste management plans, the work must be done in accordance with all relevant regulations of local/state health and environmental agencies, the EPA and the Coast Guard.

Q: Is the oiled waste considered hazardous?

A: EPA's review of sampling data provided to date shows crude oil-contaminated waste that has been collected during the response is classified in federal and state regulations as non-hazardous waste. Therefore, it is being disposed in the appropriate state-permitted municipal solid waste landfills. Testing will continue to take place during the response, including testing performed by EPA, in order to verify that the appropriate disposal or reuse/recycling options are used.

Q: Where does the waste go?

A: Waste is sent to appropriate permitted municipal waste landfills. To date, the designated sites are Chastang in Alabama; Spring Hill in Florida; various sites in Louisiana; and Pecan Grove in Mississippi. At this time, no crude oil contaminant is being sent to Pecan Grove.

Q: What happens to oily boom, sorbent material and other contaminated debris?

A: The used boom is placed into water-tight, covered roll-off boxes at a decontamination station. It is taken to a staging pad where the boom is pressure-washed with hot water and a cleaning solution (if needed). Recovered oil is collected for treatment, re-use or disposal. The wash water is treated on site and either recycled or sent to a permitted disposal facility. Decontaminated boom that can be reused is redeployed to the response or returned to the owner. If the boom cannot be reused it may be disposed in a landfill.

Oiled sorbent materials and other oily debris are bagged and placed in water-tight containers for transportation to permitted solid waste landfills.

****composting and landfarming gives me pause****

Q: Can any of the waste oil and material be recycled?

A: Certain wastes coming into the staging areas may be identified as recyclable or used for energy recovery. BP is investigating options for reuse/recycle of the oiled liquid wastes and some of the oily solids, which may include energy recovery.. In addition, BP is evaluating ways to recycle decontaminated boom and other used response equipment that contain plastics and metals. If such is the case, these wastes would be taken to the approved facility for recycling or energy recovery.

Q: How are wastes transported?

A: Generally, solid wastes are transported by truck to solid waste landfills. Liquid wastes are transported in tankers, vacuum trucks or via barge to the recycling or disposal facilities.

Q: What company has the contract for collection and disposal of the waste?

A: The waste and residue from the clean-up is collected and disposed by a qualified, experienced handler of all types of waste. The actual companies vary in each state.

To report oil in the water or on the shoreline, call 1-866-448-5816.